

I buried a raccoon wrapped in old newspaper. In the grave I placed a half-dozen Oreos and a dish of water. I said a litany in French because I don't know Latin. I knew what to say from my job at the cemetery. The men I work with have never seen a raccoon but once saw a fox run across The Garden of the Last Supper. I found tiny tracks last winter in the snow there. In the spring, we fish ducklings out of the cement lake around the memorial fountain with a dipping net so they won't drown. The ducklings love vanilla wafers but won't eat Oreos. Most of them die soon after they are relocated. I said a litany for the ducklings over the raccoon's grave. My French is terrible.

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Michael wrote that there are raccoons in Korea, but that they are not near as big as the ones in Michigan. I wrote him that there are no raccoons in the Detroit Zoo. The attendant told me that raccoons in captivity starve to death. I told him to feed them Oreos. He said I was crazy. Maggie said we should go see the Polar bears. They sit up and catch thrown marshmallows in their mouths. I threw the Polar bears an Oreo but it fell short and landed in the water in the moat around their cage. I took the rest of the package home and put them in the cookie jar. Three days later, the Oreo was still there, bloated fat, soggy, and three times its normal size. I felt wasteful and stupid. I've never seen the raccoon in the corner of the dining room.

-- Phillip Sterling  
Bowling Green OH

## NEW SYSTEMS

A long time ago in school I remember hearing about the barter system and how it came unraveled in the face of money. Then close to a decade ago I read in Playboy magazine that we wouldn't be getting money anymore in the not too distant future -- they are going to wipe out our money and finally get down to pure abstractions. Then we will get units.

Say 120 units a week for what you do, if you do anything worth units. If you don't do anything worth units, you are in trouble. You will not be able to steal other

people's units. Units will exist only in the minds of a few. The units will be recorded at the proper command from the proper power. You will carry a unit card with you wherever you go, and when you go somewhere where they are authorized to sell, you will hand the man your unit card and he will insert it into a machine and the machine will deduct the proper amount of units for the purchase you have made. If you do not have sufficient units, a small red light embedded into the top of the unit machine will begin to pulse and glow a deep red.

Now, as I sit in the evenings drinking my beer and watching the tv, I notice that there is an ad sponsored by the National Federation of Banks or some such thing, and this ad, paid for by the banks, is telling us that we needn't bother going thru all the hassle of receiving our pay checks and then going all the way to the bank to wait in line to deposit them -- by using the new "direct saving" or "direct banking" plan, we need never see our checks! Our employer can simply direct them straight into our accounts, and presto!

When the unit system is finally operative, you will still be able to go into the woods, but you will never be able to come back.

## POETS

Always of course when we were kids it was jolly business to abuse them. They were ridiculed in the classroom as the masses of children -- boys and girls -- squirmed and sweated and giggled, their eyes burning; watching the heavy weight of the teacher move itself about the room, sensing her tiredness, sensing that she was finished, sensing that we were young and our energy endless, scoffing at the weak and cryptic words she pushed toward us, knowing that she too was bewildered by the words, had no respect or understanding for them, hid amongst them like a naughty girl in the dirty laundry.

The poets get off to a bad start in life, and God only knows they bring it on themselves. Such a bitchy lot, so highstrung and full of small rages, totally incapable of solving the slightest problem. Their ineffectuality is the most attractive thing about them, however, and as time goes on those that persevere begin to draw attention. The communities of the world begin shoving things about and doing things that are uncomfortably on the outer fringes of the sensible to make room for these poets, these marvelous creatures who will not give an inch.